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—DAN BERGER, CO-EDITOR OF *REMAKING RADICALISM*

EDITED BY

SHANE BURLEY

FOREWORD BY **TAL LAVIN** AFTERWORD BY **DAVID RENTON**


¡NO PASARÁN!
ANTIFASCIST DISPATCHES FROM A WORLD IN CRISIS

¡No pasarán!

Antifascist Dispatches from a World in Crisis

Edited by Shane Burley

Foreword by Tal Lavin

Afterword by David Renton

With Editorial Support by Paul Messersmith-Glavin and the Institute for Anarchist Studies

Advance praise for *¡No Pasarán!*

"Academics and pundits have made careers out of debating the definition of fascism. We are deluged with books, each bearing its own definitions, prognoses, caveats, and warnings, only to be bumped off the bestseller list by the next self-proclaimed fascism expert. ¡No Pasarán! is not that book. These writer-activists understand fascism to be a many-headed hydra that defies typologies and strongman tropes and can only be apprehended in the dialectic of resistance. Antifascism is not an exercise in abstract thinking but an active, collective struggle for a new world. This book will get dog-eared and dirty, but not by gathering dust."—Robin D. G. Kelley, author of Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination

"This diverse collection of writings by activists, journalists, and scholars is held together by one theme: understanding and defeating the fascist danger we face today. Our grave moment demands thinking that is both historically informed and attuned to new conditions, both critical and visionary, both militant and creative. *¡No Pasarán!* brilliantly achieves all of this."—Joe Lowndes, co-author of *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity*

"Looking across history and around the world, *¡No Pasarán!* is a must-read for today's antifascists. These voices call us to embrace solidarity and self-defense and never abandon the fight for a better world as we confront the looming threat of far-right authoritarianism. This compendium of stories and analyses from the frontlines of antifascism will help us meet the daunting demands of our era with clarity, bravery, and camaraderie in the struggle."—Dan Berger, co-editor of *Remaking Radicalism: A Grassroots Documentary Reader of the United States, 1973–2001*

"Shane Burley's multifaceted compendium of writings on antifascist resistance and the far right considerably advances the breadth of resources available to researchers and activists. Drawing on many of the leading voices at the cutting edge of antifascist theory and scholarship, *¡No Pasarán!* skewers the popular one-dimensional interpretation of antifascism to reveal how our struggle must challenge all forms of oppression if we are to ever truly build a world free from fascism."—Mark Bray, author of *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook*

"This is one of my favorite kinds of book, an indispensable resource for creating a world where it would be useless. Equal parts handbook, history, and theory, it is both an excellent overview of militant struggles against fascism and a powerful weapon for the fights to come."—Vicky Osterweil, author of *In Defense of Looting*

"We can only really understand antifascism through the voices of those most committed to the cause. Above the hubbub of distortion, exaggeration, and half-truths, antifascist voices need to ring loud and clear. In *¡No pasarán!: Antifascist Dispatches from a World of Crisis*, these voices are unmistakeable. Drawing from rich stores of real-life experience, this forthright book wrestles with what it means for radical antifascists to resist the scourge of fascism and create a fascist-free future."—Nigel Copsey, author of *Anti-Fascism in Britain*

"*¡No pasarán!: Antifascist Dispatches from a World in Crisis* is a much-needed collection of essays from some of the most notable antifascists writing today. Focusing on how we got here as it pertains to fascism and white supremacy, along with what we can do about it, from a diverse cross-section of people who are directly doing the work, this book is a vital read for activists, journalists, and academics alike. These are political stories, and they are deeply personal stories, humanizing 'antifa' while detailing, with plenty of citations, why they—*we*—are absolutely necessary. Most importantly, these essays don't just highlight the social problems; they empower the reader to step up with their local community to solve them."—Kitty Stryker, editor of *Ask: Building Consent Culture*

Foreword: On the Uses and Manifestations of Antifascism

Tal Lavin

What is antifascism? What does it look like? And how does it manifest in the real world?

The simplest explanation is also the truest: antifascism exists in relation to fascism as antimatter does to matter—its opposite, and, hopefully, its equal. As fascism rises and spreads, so does the need for antifascism, and the people inspired to fight back. "Fascism," as broadly defined amongst an international, highly diffuse, and individuated network, is not subject to the slippery-slope arguments so often put out by currish and mealymouthed commentators: it is defined quite narrowly, as the words and actions of those who espouse a politics of genocide, who seek to destroy and harm members of marginalized groups, who openly or covertly align themselves with past and present fascistic movements, and who agitate for or commit acts of violence against the minorities they despise.

So much, so simple. The second component, however, and perhaps what makes the concept of antifascism so baffling and inimical to a media sphere that aligns itself most readily with institutions and with the state, is that antifascists are *nonstate actors*, individuals and collectives acting from no authority but their own desire for a better world. For historical inspiration, antifascists turn to those individuals who, in the 1930s, battled Hitler's rising Brownshirts on the street under the banner of *Antifascistische Aktion*, and the tens of thousands of volunteer fighters from all over the world who joined together in the fight against the would-be military dictator Francisco Franco during the Spanish Civil War. It's from the latter conflict that an antifascist slogan, used all around the world, arose, Dolores Ibarrurri's war cry: "¡No pasarán!" They shall not pass! This is the antifascist position: arrayed in defense against an encroaching force of destruction and violence, sacrificing their effort and their bodies to protect all they hold dear.

This is why, when a unitary, threatening, and sinister image of antifascists

filters into public consciousness, I feel an urge to countermand it with my own knowledge of the beautiful, brave, complex, often female and queer-led, collectives with which people reach out to one another, grasp hands, and turn to face the threat, stronger because they are one another's company.

It's hard, however, to put a face on antifascism, cuddly or otherwise. For protection against the brutality of the fascists they oppose, and in order to avoid concentrating power in any given individual, antifa is largely anonymous and decentralized. Like everything else about antifascism, this is a defensive position. Antifascists are in a three-way fight, since they are nonstate actors whose commitment to protecting marginalized communities often puts them in opposition to the brutal and racist systems of law enforcement. Antifascists seek to protect themselves and their communities against fascists; but far from the fear mongering that gets so much purchase in the broader world, antifascism is a movement of reaction, which operates in opposition to extant and encroaching fascism. Antifascism is a movement of protection and is not a thoroughgoing political philosophy. It is rather a set of tactics and a commitment to that protective stance.

One of the things I love about antifascism—and the reason I feel comfortable defining myself as an antifascist, though it is not a sole political valence in and of itself—is the multiplicity of means and uses that go into the term. There are many methodologies and roles for antifascists; although this is elided by ungenerous and alarmist press coverage, street violence—countering fascist marches by physically interposing oneself between fascists and the public—is just a small nexus of antifascist activity, one part of a broad spectrum of activities that constitute antifascist struggle.

Methods to thwart fascism are at least as variegated as the ways to spread it, if not more so. Antifascism can utilize the full spectrum of human creativity: there are those who create antifascist art to undermine the spread of genocidal propaganda, and music that invigorates and inspires. There are those who provide food, clothing, safety gear, childcare, and water to street operatives; those who work bravely as street medics, bandaging wounds, and flushing tear gas from weeping eyes; and there is a whole range of activities, in the Internet age, that occur from behind the keyboard. These include infiltration and surveillance of fascist groups and relaying gleaned

intelligence to others in order to anticipate fascists' movements. There is the intentional sowing of internal discord to thwart fascist operations. There is the digital detective work of unmasking the identities of those who seek to harm and threaten minorities from beneath the veil of anonymity, pairing ugly words and threats to real names and faces. There is the work of writing and education, whether journalistic or in the form of community resources to keep people aware of the state of fascist movements. There are those who call for boycotts of venues who host fascist conferences or events, in the effort to disrupt logistics, and to provide disincentives to take fascists' money. There are those who target the advertising and monetization of fascist blogs, shops, and video channels, or seek to deplatform fascist ideologues from social-media perches that enable them to recruit.

None of these activities are less or more antifascist; each is necessary, each is complementary, each is part of the broad, sprawling, individuated effort of building a dike against the rising tide of violent cruelty that threatens to sweep away our world. I am proud to be an antifascist, proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with the many people who contributed to this book, proud to be a part of a movement that stands without aid except one another to dismantle the fearsome and violent forces that would gladly sweep away all that is precious and good, all that is vulnerable and necessary, in the service of a cruel and violent image of the world.

Introduction: What Is Antifascism?

Shane Burley

As I was filing into the Patriot Prayer rally in Portland, Oregon, the attendees started closing ranks and preparing to march, and I got nervous. The June 3rd, 2018, rally was simply the most recent in what had become a staccato series of appearances as far-right leader Joey Gibson and his Proud Boys hangers-on would repeatedly come to Portland to hold rallies laced with transphobic, anti-immigrant, conspiracy-minded speakers. The event was billed as a place to speak their minds, to confront the "intolerant left" of a city like Portland, but the fact that most attendees came suited in body armor, donning helmets and brandishing weapons, chiseled away at the veneer that this was about protecting free speech. These rallies had begun in Portland, Oregon in 2016 as Donald Trump's election neared. After a past far-right demonstration attendee stabbed multiple people on a Portland train in 2017 amid a racist rant, Gibson decided to hold yet another unpopular rally in Terry Schrunk Plaza, a park dead center in Portland's busy corporate district. Gibson's hundreds of attendees were met by antifascists on all sides with overlapping contingents, including the diverse coalition called Portland United Against Hate to the west, trade union activists and socialists to the east, and a militant bloc led by Rose City Antifa in the adjoining park directly to their north.

Rose City Antifa has a long history since its 2007 founding and was the first US-based organization to use the "antifa" label. They emerged out of a longer history of Portland's antifascist movement, including the earlier Anti-Racist Action (ARA) and a series of antiracist skinhead crews, the best known of which were the Baldies and Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice (SHARP). These earlier groups grew as neo-Nazi gangs patrolled the streets of working-class cities, dominating some of the most public areas in the city such as Pioneer Courthouse Square, just a few blocks from where Patriot Prayer was insisting on gathering. In the 1980s, Nazis had infiltrated popular bars and music venues, and ARA and various antiracist and

“traditional” skinhead gangs pushed them out, refusing to shy away from direct confrontation when necessary.1 These were young kids, often getting involved in cities around the country just because they saw the threat of neo-Nazi skinhead groups such as the White Knights and those associated with White Aryan Resistance (WAR).2 In Portland, this became glaringly obvious when a gang affiliated with WAR called Eastside White Pride murdered Ethiopian student Mulugeta Seraw in 1988, leading to high-profile trials of WAR leader Tom Metzger and bringing the street battles out into the open. Rose City Antifa took up that tradition of street defense and chose a more explicitly activist orientation: they would get organized and use deep research and structured campaigns to push neo-Nazi groups such as the Hammerskins and Volksfront out of their community.3 The ARA Network evolved into the Torch Network that linked together a growing number of antifascist groups including New York Antifa, Philly Antifa, Atlanta Antifascists, and Chicago Southside ARA. Over the years, these antifascist groups grew as the far right did, often challenging attempts by racists, antisemites, or nationalists to join parts of the left that were more vulnerable to manipulation.

But nothing compared with the explosion of antifascism as Trump came on the scene and the alt-right emerged as the largest white nationalist movement in decades. Hundreds of groups formed, with greater and lesser success, and Rose City Antifa was an example of how a well-organized, explicitly “militant antifascist” group could take on the far right.

On June 3rd, organizers with Rose City Antifa and other antifascist groups had amassed just around the corner from Gibson’s rally, supported by hundreds of community members who, although often unaffiliated with any organization, wanted to support the effort: no one wanted the Proud Boys to have the run of the streets. Gibson led his crowd and his associate Haley Adams, a woman slight in appearance until her commanding voice grabbed your attention, called for the march to begin. She secured her own helmet, emblazoned with a sticker that said, “It’s Ok to Be White.”

Patriot Prayer started to move and Gibson, at the front, led them down a couple of blocks and, taking a sharp left, directly into the antifascists. A few seconds passed as a few far-right activists lingered up front, many with pipes and bats in hand, before they charged and began a full-frontal assault on demonstrators. Activists, most completely unarmed, were gang beaten,

pulled to the ground where their heads were pummeled by a combination of boots and repurposed police batons. I had followed Gibson and now rushed into the crowd, seeing my friend Alexander Reid Ross trying to pull someone off the ground as he was being beaten nearly unconscious by a group of men adorned in paintball gear. Police eventually arrived, as a half dozen people lay on the ground, some of whom had to be rushed to the hospital with lasting injuries such as a skull fracture. I could still see their blood staining the concrete when I returned days later.

This was scary, and Portland was particularly egregious in this regard, but it wasn't unique. These were the scenes that were happening around the country, and they continued. After the protests responding to the 2020 police killing of George Floyd, Portland stood out as people kept up nightly actions for over a hundred days.4 On August 22nd, a far-right mob arrived on the steps of the Multnomah County Justice Center, the courthouse that had been the target of much of these police abolition protests, where a line of armed men, holding shields, proceeded to carry out an unimpeded attack on journalists and demonstrators. Police stayed several blocks away, instructing people over the loudspeaker to "police themselves" and reminding us that everyone has a right to an opinion.5 Later that night, the police used flash-bang grenades, teargas, and batons on a nonviolent abolitionist protest at a precinct across town.

Incurring this kind of violence had largely become par for the course. Between May 25th and July 7th, 2020 alone, there were 66 vigilante attacks on protesters, and there were 104 car-ramming attacks that year as well.6 Police were engaging in violence against protesters at record levels, often motivated by the same conspiracy theories as far-right vigilantes. The year became incredibly deadly as assailants fired guns and threw homemade explosives at primarily nonviolent protesters who were doing things like blocking roads and crowding precincts to raise the profile of racist police killings.7

Over the Trump years, Portland was matched by other cities, such as Berkeley, where giant crowds set fire to the University of California Berkeley's campus rather than let far-right provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos speak, or in Boston, Massachusetts, where, just days after the violent "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, a failed Proud Boy rally was met by 40,000 counterdemonstrators.8 Every attempt at a far-right rally—in

California, Illinois, Georgia, and Texas—was met by antifascists, sometimes organized by ideologically driven militant antifascist groups, sometimes by liberal coteries of church committees and nonprofits, and other times by a mass of unaffiliated residents, tired of living in fear. All these were correctly captured under the banner of "antifascism," despite being incredibly distinct from one another, with their own unique approaches, tactics (even when they were more implicit than explicit), and demographics.

I'm writing this on the first anniversary of the January 6th "Capitol insurrection," where we were reminded just how volatile the far right can be, and what it means for them to have state support from elected leaders. A largely unaffiliated mass, motivated by trenchant conspiracy theories, stormed what many assumed was one of the most heavily fortified buildings in the country, threatening to murder officials and leaving several people dead. This was a turning point for much of the country in the same way that "Unite the Right" was in August 2017, and the public is refusing to let it stand. Hundreds of people, both inside and outside of the US, are participating in the investigations into what happened, with group names like the "Deepstate Dogs" or the "Sedition Hunters." They are combing through videos and social media profiles, hoping to locate perpetrators and aid the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in bringing about successful prosecutions. These volunteers, certainly motivated by their own antifascist inclinations, are aiding law enforcement's alleged attempts to crush what is a broad, far-right movement. Does that make them antifascist? Or is there more to it than that?

To counter the bizarre smear campaign and conspiracy mongering around the term "antifa," many people have focused on restoring the legitimacy of the term by pointing out that it simply means antifascist: if you're against fascism, you are antifa. But it's more complicated than that. The term "antifa" means a particular style of militant antifascist organizing: closed organizations with well-trained members that combine deep research, doxing, pressure campaigns, and direct physical confrontation when necessary. You are not suddenly a member of some close-knit antifa group simply by virtue of attending a protest or voicing your discontent, and certainly not by acting as an unpaid agent of federal law enforcement.9

It certainly makes sense that there's an effort to restore the good name of

antifa because it has been tarnished by spurious allegations throughout the Trump years. Legislation has been introduced to label antifa a "domestic terrorist group" despite no such legal category existing.10 "Demasking" bills were introduced, or given new enforcement, in states around the country under the same model as was used to break up the criminal conspiracy of the Ku Klux Klan in earlier generations.11 Complex conspiracy theories flourished about antifa's role in catastrophes, such as allegedly setting 2020's devastating Pacific Northwest forest fires, which became so trenchant that right-wing militias interfered with life-saving mutual aid work for fear that it was all an antifa plot.12 Antifa was hiding around every corner, driven by their crystalizing hatred of American values, malevolence incarnate. Antifa became the go-to word for anything vaguely liberal, anything politically contentious. Environmental, labor, and antipolice protests were all quickly labeled antifa, despite having their own ideological and organizational histories. The people attending these demonstrations probably also hate fascism but, by collapsing those terms, the right-wing agitators who are driving this narrative revealed that their purpose was really to cause panic rather than describe reality.13 Antifascists were grafted onto every piece of fear mongering and assigned to any despised personage, all in an effort to dehumanize activists, making it easier to justify violence against them despite antifascist violence being statistical noise when compared with the brutal legacy of white nationalism.14

Even when bad-faith actors aren't determining jargon, antifascism can be difficult to define. This comes, in part, from how we define fascism. For the Black Panther Party and many groups in what is sometimes called the "Black antifascist tradition," definitions of fascism include the police and state actors engaged in repression of social movements.15 This would, reflexively, make antipolice organizing a necessary center of antifascism. Many Indigenous groups have extended this a step further by indicting colonialism itself, either as an earlier example of fascism, or with fascism being the logical continuation of the colonialist project.

I use what is often called a "New Consensus" definition of fascism as being a revolutionary ideology that seeks to use mythic narratives to build a society of hierarchical stratification and essentialized identity, codified through a cult of violence and actualized through populist mass participation.16 It's not enough to say that fascism comes from above

because, as I could see at the Patriot Prayer rally and we could all see from the easily available YouTube livestreams from the Capitol insurrection, there are also everyday people engaging with far-right movements as a way of protecting their privilege. It is also important to note that, although there is certainly overlap and fuzzy boundaries, the term "fascism" does not apply to all the far right, yet antifascism often takes on an expanded list of opponents based on their fascist potential or their ability to maintain some of the most egregious aims, effects, or consequences of fascism. This means that, although certainly relative, a definition of fascism must necessarily exist on its own with its own parameters, perspectives, and internal dialogue.17

Scholar of antifascism, Nigel Copsey, notes that it is not enough to define fascism and use it to define antifascism in its reverse. "The definition of fascism must rest solely with the antifascist, regardless of whether or not they assess/define fascism correctly," says Copsey.18 He suggests that there has to be an "antifascist minimum," a base level by which all those labeled as antifascists repudiate fascism in all its forms. I will take this a step further and say that antifascism, at least when it comes to contemporary forms, is activism and organizing taken by people outside of the state and law enforcement. This means independent groups that take action to confront the far right not by relying on institutional power but by taking power into their own hands. The tactics, then, are widely diverse, but the "minimum" would define out police, for example, as a useful foil to fascist growth. Devin Zane Shaw outlines the difference between militant antifascism and liberal antifascism, wherein liberal antifascism "funnels resistance toward institutionalized forms of political representation."19 Antifascism cannot be sustained ideologically by channeling it into the political machine of democratic governments, even if people can engage in antifascist organizing on the one hand and liberal electoralism on the other.20 It is certainly true that a slate of arrests or a well-placed lawsuit can hinder, sometimes even obliterate, fascist organizations, but antifascism is bigger than this. Instead, it sees something fundamentally flawed in the state approach to fascism, at least in as much as it believes that independent action of some type is ultimately necessary. Watching Twitch streams for the FBI isn't going to be enough.

Because of this dynamic, when we say antifascism, we are saying more

than opposition to fascism. Antifascism itself has a series of implicit ideological assumptions that change as it encounters other ideologies, influences, and personalities. Antifascism has a critical view of the world gleaned from the complicated role that fascism plays: we can now rethink our entire political vision from the knowledge that fascism is a possible outcome. Nationalism, state power, subcultures, social movements, religious life, and so many more areas can have antifascist interventions, a new perspective with which to challenge our assumptions. Antifascism can, and often is, unpopular: it must take on challenges where it sees potential far-right growth, even when that is not agreed upon by the larger public or a subculture. An example of this is the tension between antifascists and anti-imperialist groups, which often clash around support for despotic and racist regimes in the Global South under the guise of fighting US imperialism, or which adopt antisemitic conspiracy theories under the guise of subverting the banking class.21 Antifascism proposes that our analysis may not be nuanced enough, that it must be challenged from a more intersectional place that looks at all forms of oppression, and that, if we don't, we could face disaster.

Antifascism has seen through real-world experience that the structures of the police have more often than not been turned on the left and marginalized communities rather than the far right. Inherent distrust of law enforcement is a core feature of this "essential type." Antifascism also assumes that extraordinary action is to be taken, that debate is not enough, because the threat of fascism is so great. This is what antifascist scholar David Renton locates as the core of the antifascist equation: the more clear the threat of violence, such as from groups like the Proud Boys, or more blatant white supremacist groups, such as with the alt-right, the more clear it is that antifascist interventions are necessary.22

This dynamic means that antifascism is a controversial break with the faith in the state necessary for liberal democracy, which assumes the government and its agencies are a necessary preservative force for human rights (or at least a necessary evil). At the height of the panic over who and what antifa is, ostensibly liberal writer Peter Beinart wrote a piece for *The Atlantic* that criticized antifa for being as bad as the fascists because both are violating the boundaries of liberal democracy.23 Conversely, this could be read as a "state of exception," some actors taking unaccountable action

to stop forces that they believe the current system is simply unable to - adequately neutralize. “By acting to protect vulnerable people and spaces and employing force, militant antifascists simultaneously usurp the role of law enforcement as protectors of safety and social order as well as challenge the legitimacy of the state’s claim to a monopoly on that role and the use of force,” says criminologist Stanislav Vysotsky, who analyzed the role that militant antifascist groups have in maintaining an antiracist community standard outside of the state’s approach to laws, incarceration, and criminalization.24

It might be more appropriate to say that antifascism itself holds a few assumptions that its ethics and strategies are bound to; namely, that liberal democracy has cultivated this fascist problem and therefore is unable (or unwilling) to eradicate it. Antifascism has not always agreed on what fascism is and where it forms, but there is a general understanding that unchecked hierarchies and the legacies of colonialism, white supremacy, and other systems of oppression can move from a space of structural inequality to an increasingly lethal form of insurrectionary violence. This process is fueled by very real contradictions in the system itself: falling real wages, ecological and public health catastrophes, the conflicted role of identity, and the inability to adequately solve some of society’s most pressing issues through existing channels. Antifascism both fills this gap and offers a glimpse of something more: a direct action–oriented social movement that refuses to play by the rules of a society that has repeatedly failed to live up to its promise of freedom and equality.

Within this, there is still the question of what can be considered antifascism, and the possibilities are only expanding. As we saw mutual aid groups form to support communities during the pandemic, many who were abandoned by state agencies, there was a repositioning for how this kind of support work was seen by social movements.25 The ability of a mass movement or political project to reproduce itself depends on the ability of people to have their most basic needs met. You can’t expect people to spend hours in consensus-driven meetings if they are working three jobs just to pay for their child’s health insurance. Mutual aid is what sustained a lot of the action in the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. In Portland, there were microgroups that took on different components of a support infrastructure: a group that gave rides to people to the protest, a group that delivered food to

people on the demonstration line, one that raised bail funds, and another that picked people up from jail when they were bailed out. In other places that support infrastructure expanded so much that it became a microsociety itself, such as the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (renamed the Capitol Hill Organized Protest) that expanded the demonstration space into one founded on mutual aid as the principle of its autonomy.26 These protests could be sustained over such a long time because there were people actively sustaining them, and that's the same with movements against the far right. "Antifascism exists in opposition to the weaponization of belonging by identity-driven, right-wing forces that feed on individualism, erase history, and fuel our complicity with atrocity," says Kelly Hayes, an antifascist abolitionist organizer and writer based in Chicago, Illinois. "That means part of our work is creating space for belonging in a time of collapse. Because if we don't, fascist forces will. We need to nurture empathy in a fearful world. We need to do the work of cultivating shared realities amid a great social fracturing into subrealities and unrealities."27

This mutual aid work is part of where the lines between different movements can effectively blur and do so in positive ways. The framework for mutual aid groups created in 2020 to meet the pandemic threat then was shifted to support the protests, then went on to help with natural disasters, then was ready to support unhoused communities during antihomeless "sweeps" and support eviction defenders as moratoriums concluded. The mutual aid that supports antifascists can easily support other types of struggle, binding together different social movements.28 Likewise, antifascists offer their own type of service to these groups: they challenge creeping far-right ideas and activists, those trying to manipulate movements through "entryist" tactics, which are attempts by fascists to enter left-wing movements and corrupt or recruit from them. Antifascists also assist those needing safety and defense when threatened by reactionaries, which means that defending marginalized communities is of the highest concern. There is necessary cross-pollination; we are not alone in this fight. This fluidity can help antifascism be seen as one of many necessary and interweaving social movements.

The "great antifa scare" was followed by state repression, leaving many antifascist political prisoners in need of "jail support" and long-term help with re-entering society. "Supporting the people who courageously put

themselves in the line of danger to confront hate is an essential part of being an antifascist," says William Tull, an administrator with the Antifa International collective that coordinates the International Antifascist Defense Fund. "Real solidarity happens when antifascists know they can rely on us all to back them up when they run into trouble. Fighting hate is never a crime. Anti-fascism is always self-defense."29 The fund raises money year-round and distributes it to antifascist political prisoners and those facing medical expenses or loss of income due to antifascist activism.

As the distorted view of antifa activism overwhelmed media discussions, we started seeing intense repression against activists. People such as David Campbell were incarcerated for what they argue were acts of self-defense. Alexander Dial, in Portland, Oregon had to rely on the help of the International Antifascist Defense Fund and others as they fought a potentially long prison sentence for disarming a member of the American Guard when they were attacking antifascist demonstrators with a clawhammer.30 "The Left is seeking progress and that means changing institutions in ways that [help the most] people. And if you're running these institutions that [are] capitalizing on marginalized populations, you are going to fight back [against those reforms] with all the powers of the system," says Dial.31 The perception that antifascists were engaged in some type of criminal enterprise gave license to prosecute them even for virtual activities. Daniel Baker was given 44 months in prison for posting about self-defense on social media.32 A group of San Diego activists were charged with criminal conspiracy based on the idea that they must have been in collusion because they interacted with the same social media content, showing a disconnect of the prosecution both on how social media works and the basic elements of community organizing.33

Many of the antifascism tactics discussed in this book necessarily rely on people outside of antifascist organizations. Rose City Antifa members often explain the difference between the inside and the outside of their organization, trying hard to make that distinction clear to onlookers so as to protect the surrounding community from the kind of vulnerabilities that organizers inside of antifascist groups face. Movements require organizers, as well as activists, or those who participate in less committed ways but who make mass strategies possible. What binds these people together is opposition to fascism and the "no platform" idea that space, resources, and

even a voice should be stripped from the far right, and that this should be done through the horizontal participation of everyday people rather than solely relying on law enforcement. How this happens should not be prescribed ahead of time because it is context dependent; sometimes an art show works, other times a celebratory counterdemonstration, and sometimes a black bloc that physically blockades a space and tells the fascists "*¡No pasarán!*" (They Shall Not Pass!) makes sense.

Building a diverse and growing antifascist movement requires keeping tabs on the far right, which organizers such as Eric K. Ward remind us are a "social movement like any other."34 Much of the past several years was spent explaining that all white nationalists are not the caricature of the Southern Klansman, toothless and inhabiting some elitist fantasy that urban liberals have of poor rural Americans. People like Richard Spencer, well-coiffed and educated, wearing a tailored suit and talking about "human biological diversity," are also white nationalists. But this should only be a starting point, and we must have an even larger picture of what the far right is, including when it pretends to be a part of the left. Many of the chapters in this volume have an international perspective on this issue and look at how the frenetic nature of fascist movements can make them seem invisible: fascists appropriate leftist tactics and language, they talk about "national liberation" and claim to be antiwar, and they sometimes even try to recruit in what feels like the least likely spaces of the radical left.

Antifascists are also going to have to adapt to new conditions and build a cultural plurality necessary to build an opposition with teeth. We need antifascist journalism that takes its operative principles from the disruption of far-right movements, just as we are going to need spiritual, subcultural, and art spaces to engage people on all levels.35 Without acknowledging who our communities are and the different backgrounds we come from, organizers are unable to build a social movement that connects to our uniqueness or sees us as meaningful constituents of it. This also means a revival of antifascist history, viewing contemporary movements as an important part of this larger continuity rather than simply celebrating the heroics of Cable Street while forgetting the utility of open-source research and digital pressure tactics.36

"[T]o build stronger foundations of trust and commitment that are capable of sustaining larger network structures, we need to commit more deeply to

those groupings of which we are already a part—our friends and social connections, our religious institutions or physical pursuits or hobbies, our neighborhoods," says Lara Messersmith-Glavin, a founding member of the Portland-based antifascist group Pop Mob, which used music and carnivalesque events to draw people into really large antifascist actions capable of taking on Patriot Prayer, the Proud Boys, and the alt-right. "We need to bring antifascist (antiracist, anticolonial, intersectional feminist, queer-liberatory, body-positive, antiableist) consciousness to our daily lives and practices with full mindfulness and commit to the long work of transforming those spaces we already inhabit into actively antifascist spaces, as well."37

Pop Mob is one example of this mixed method of building coalitions after witnessing events such as the 2018 Patriot Prayer–led attack on antifascists. Their goal was to get hundreds if not thousands of people to join antifascist actions in an effort to overwhelm far-right demonstrations that were happening monthly. They worked alongside militant antifascist groups on the one hand and liberal nonprofits and civic organizations on the other, acting as a bridge between the two and respecting the strategic value of each.38 Communities around the world are experimenting with how to cultivate their own unique synthesis in an effort to adapt to rapidly accelerating change, meet people where they are at, and hopefully build free-standing movements that feel pertinent to the lives of the people in their orbit.

Part of this approach is to acknowledge our reality as inherently complex and part of huge, interlocking systems of oppression and inequality, finding a way for different organizations to weave together so that they can complement each other's approach. In Georgia, the Atlanta Justice Alliance formed to build up the Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations in the wake of the killing of George Floyd. They have shifted gears to work largely on mutual aid, particularly on setting up food distributions and supporting houseless encampments, but that framework gave them an edge when far-right protesters were threatening to come to the state capitol. Typically, there are large tent encampments there, so the Atlanta Justice Alliance set about pressuring the city to keep open warming stations so they could help move the houseless communities away from the state capitol, where armed vigilantes would patrol, and to these expanded centers and

hotels. “We kept people out of harm’s way,” says Raven, an organizer with the Alliance. “You’ve got to let other organizations and people in the community know what your goals are so that they know that you are aligning with their lines of thought and what their end goals are, even if they are not exactly the same. . . . You’ve got to create community in our community.”39

The alt-right has hit serious interference, the larger Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement is reeling from the January 6th indictments and Trump’s electoral loss, and there has been some retreat, but they aren’t gone. To assume that small changes, such as Democratic Party victories, are a meaningful foil to far-right advancement is to misread the overall trajectory of their movement.

We are living through a break in the neoliberal consensus of recent decades and a collapse of the political center; although the larger societal shift will be uneven (and capital will try to force stability when it’s profitable), it is unlikely to return to normal. Instead, we are re-entering the historical process, which is one of struggle with a vision toward something much bigger. Between January 2020 and July 2021, the Bridging Divides Initiative at Princeton University, which tracks far-right groups and violence, saw over 953 incidents from armed or paramilitary groups, 94% of which targeted BLM events. A full 14% of these involved shots being fired. A significant factor in this growth was myths about antifa or election-related conspiracy theories.40 These theories became so extreme that they inspired situations such as law enforcement chasing phantom buses around Northern California, consumed by the idea that they carried a threatening antifa mob, or providing cover to right-wing politicians who believed it was actually antifa dressed in cosplay who stormed the Capitol rather than their own base of supporters.41

A 2021 study from the University of Chicago showed that around 21 million people thought it might be necessary to use violence to “restore” a Trump presidency, and over half of those believe in the antisemitic QAnon conspiracy theory, which suggests that a cabal of satanic pedophiles in the Democratic Party are harvesting the blood of children. A full 63% of these Trump faithfuls believe in some version of the “Great Replacement” theory that posits that whites are being demographically disenfranchised and replaced, potentially through “white genocide” or “mass immigration.”42

“In the last two years, we have seen mass terrorist attacks driven by white supremacy in the US and around the world. They have been inspired in particular by the ideas of the Great Replacement, which argues that white people are being genocided in their home countries and replaced by non-white immigrants,” says Heidi L. Beirich, in her 2021 congressional testimony on “accelerationism,” the far-right approach of using mass violence to destabilize society, which she says is growing on a massive scale.43 An example of this kind of violence was the December 28th, 2021, shooting in Denver, Colorado, where a man radicalized in the fringe world of “manosphere” figures took a gun into several tattoo parlors and murdered four people.44 From January 1st to May 8th, 2020, the far right committed 90% of terror attacks, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies.45

The “End of History” that Francis Fukuyama heralded with the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was a brief detour in the actual turmoil that marks the ongoing battle of the masses against those at the tip of the pyramid of wealth and power. Fascism is a possible pathway for that anger to take, and this new world of explosive crisis and change makes fascism an increasing possibility for how rage may be both expressed and cultivated by those in power. Antifascism is the option we have to both protect ourselves and channel discontent into the kinds of social movements that want to change the root of the suffering—inequality and structural violence—and create an alternative based on faith in human flourishing.

The tragedy of the early passing of anarchist anthropologist David Graeber was a shock and a surprise, particularly because we were living through a series of both crises and resiliencies that seemed plucked from his imagination. The first book by Graeber I ever read was *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, a tract that pulls together observations about Indigenous societies and their relationship to the political ideas of anarchism. Part of his fieldwork focuses on areas of Madagascar where the state had largely retreated, leaving remote regions to their own affairs. Graeber noted that, even in the absence of a state, which he defines as the codified monopoly on the use of violence, societies still needed social consensus.

"Those unwilling to establish an apparatus of violence for enforcing decisions necessarily have to develop an apparatus for creating and maintaining social consensus," wrote Graeber. "[As] an apparent result, the internal war ends up projected outwards into endless night battles and forms of spectral violence."46 This "spectral violence" could take the form of mythic tales that promised violence from a supernatural realm. These mythic tales established social control by replicating the state's enforcement mechanisms, even if it just existed in the minds of the community. This has often been presented as a kind of "road untaken," a misstep in the creation of advancing civilization. But as Graeber and his coauthor David Wengrow say in Graeber's final contribution to this discussion, *The Dawn of Everything*, our society, and its institutions, do involve choice. "[We] could have been living under radically different conceptions of what human society is actually about," write Graeber and Wengrow. "It means that mass enslavement, genocide, prison camps, even patriarchy or regimes of wage labour never had to happen. But on the other hand it also suggests that, even now, the possibilities for human intervention are far greater than we're inclined to think."47

The threat of fascism is the threat that social change will go fundamentally wrong, putting us in a worse situation than where we began. There is no mistaking the despotic collapse we are witnessing in slow motion, from the fragmenting of the global economy to accelerating ecological devastation. Our society was not an inevitability, it could have been different, and so can our future. How it plays out depends on our intervention. Antifascism can act as an antibiotic against the worst inclinations and possibilities, which want to further reify social stratification and cruelty as a shortsighted way out for a privileged few. But we can choose something different entirely.

In thinking of how we want to respond, we also have the option of -replicating models of state repression and mass incarceration, hoping that we will be able to wield those weapons against our enemies. Alternatively, we can let our responses to this threat reflect the world we hope to build. The state is the codification of explicit violence, but the consequences offered by custom, social accountability, solidarity, or even malevolent spirits are "spectral." "Antifascism is—besides merely being against fascism—the idea that we are indeed individuals with individual thought

and ideas who have no desire to impose that will on others," says antifascist organizer Daryle Lamont Jenkins.48

Antifascists are coming together to defend communities without establishing the same structures, like hierarchical and violent law enforcement, that they likewise criticize. The alternative is to rely on each other and our ability to create consequences and accountability, without wielding systematized oppression. That community accountability is its own kind of "spectral violence," and it's one that hopes to provide a window into what safety could look like away from the auspices of courts and militaries and tribunals and firing squads.

Although the antifascist movement is regularly indicted for its supposed reliance on violence, the kind of fleeting conflicts engaged in by some militant antifascists pales in comparison to both what the fascists hope to dispense in the future, or how the police and perhaps military will act to "maintain order." Instead, the approach of antifascists is to confront violence, both structurally and ideologically, in an effort to unseat its very foundations. This idea holds antifascists accountable by forcing them to live up to ideals and refusing to sacrifice the ethics of a revolutionary society for the simple pleasure of defeating one's enemy.

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Afterword: Perspectives for Antifascists

David Renton

The chapters in this book were written during, or in the immediate aftermath of, Donald Trump's presidency. There was a reciprocal relationship between Trump and his followers while he was in power. To keep them interested in him, he had to some extent adopted their worldview, especially in the weeks leading up to the 2020 elections, telling the press that a street army of antifascists was on the verge of seizing power and that only Trump could stop the rise of "people that you've never heard of. People that are in the dark shadows. People that are controlling the streets . . . thugs wearing these dark uniforms, black uniforms with gear."[134] Antifascists ("antifa") were blamed by Trump's followers for forest fires, for causing police violence, even for the January 6th attempted coup.

Trump, however, lost the presidential election in November 2020, and whether he ever believed he could use a street army to overturn the vote, that attempt failed. The immediate prospect facing hundreds of his supporters is now of lengthy trials and perhaps (for some of them) short periods of imprisonment.

As long ago as February 2017, the novelist Ursula K. Le Guin complained of the effect that Trump was having on his opponents. She called herself "appalled" at "the constant, obsessive attention paid to Trump." She warned that his opponents were giving him their attention and allowing him to dominate their own lives. "Every witty parody, hateful gibe, clever take-off," she insisted, "merely plays his game."[135]

Five years later, his Twitter account has been taken away, severing one of the loudest parts of his bully pulpit. How antifascists organize in this new period will be shaped by our assessment of whether we see Trump's reverse as temporary or permanent. In the liberal press, the assumption is the latter. Democrats will hold on to the institutions of the US state, reverse the Republican majority on the US Supreme Court, take back the state legislatures, et cetera so that, on a short timescale, the US will once again

be a thriving democracy. Even if that hope was correct, it remains true that the far right has been able to build up infrastructure in these past six years and has the benefit of its recent success: funds, habits of networking, an audience. Even if Trump himself was to disappear, the far right's successful organizing has left a legacy. For years to come, in the cities where we live, antifascists will be facing an emboldened enemy.

The other problem is that, ever since 2008, politics worldwide have taken a common form. Perhaps once electorates were willing to cast their vote for an inoffensive, middle-of-the-road politician, believing that if they did what the system expected of them, their own life chances would improve from generation to generation. If that belief was held then, it is no longer. Rather, the trillions spent on bailing out the banks left a subtle but indelible message—that the politicians will only promote the interests of the rich, that none of the old "rules" apply.

Because the left in most countries has failed to learn those lessons, the right is winning elections. We face a new populist right willing to ally with fascists, and to mimic their language on immigration, culture wars, et cetera. The states that are building their global influence—Russia, Israel, India—sponsor authoritarians. Why should we expect a return to democratic innocence when more countries are abandoning democracy than joining it? Why should we expect liberalism to prosper in the US when it is dying in Italy, in Britain, and in France?

Should Trump regain power in November 2024, or even if something less dramatic happens and we see an echo of Trump—a member of his family, or Tucker Carlson, or whoever else it turns out to be—standing on a platform that is recognizably Trump 2.0, then the political crisis of 2016–20 will recur save with higher stakes. Imagine a movement leadership that shared Trump's dark fantasies of building walls and imprisoning his opponents but, next time, combined that malice with the competence Trump lacked and a new resolution to turn authoritarian plans into actuality. Or think of the Trump movement, invigorated by stories of liberal betrayal, and determined to secure revenge for the January 6th martyrs.

There are few examples of antifascists in history prospering following their rival's defeat. After 1945, antifascists failed to impose their politics on postwar Germany, dominated as that country was by the politics of the occupying powers—the US, Britain, France, and the Union of Soviet

Socialist Republics. In consequence, of the 150,000 Germans identified as having carried out war crimes, just one in five were prosecuted. West German intelligence agent Klaus Barbie had tortured prisoners in Lyon, France. Heinrich Lübke, the designer of concentration camps, served for 10 years as president of West Germany.[136]

After the defeat of fascism in Italy, millions of people hoped that a new society would be born, characterized by workers' control of industry. Instead, under the influence of the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI [Italian Communist Party]), workers were told to disarm, and an amnesty was offered to virtually all war criminals. In July 1948, the leader of the PCI, Palmiro Togliatti, was shot and nearly killed. There followed a general strike, placing workers in control of the cities—and again the PCI demobilized the movement. Seven thousand people were arrested, five million rounds of ammunition impounded. Never again would that country's radical opposition get close to taking power.[137]

One possible way to think of antifascism after the temporary eclipse of our opponents is to take seriously Max Horkheimer's famous saying that "whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about fascism." Writing in 1939, the Frankfurt theorist's point was that fascism is the product of capitalism and cannot be defeated so long as the latter thrives. Several chapters of this book have shown that this relationship remains in place. Fascism is the successor, developed in some of the richest countries of the world, to the inequality and violence that were commonplace under colonialism. Fascism thrives on racism, sexism, and even transphobia, which recur in multiple forms under capitalism.

The insight that fascism is a recurring antagonist suggests that there can be no permanent victory over it except through the defeat of capitalism. All we can do on the far left is build our own forces, innovate where we can, and, by capturing the politics of the moment better than our opponents, extend the periods of relative quiet. That is the best that history offers us.

Knowing that our enemy's defeat is temporary, we can allow ourselves a short period of relaxation. Then, as the cycle begins again—we prepare for the battles to come.

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"Academics and pundits have made careers out of debating the definition of fascism. We are deluged with books, each bearing its own definitions, prognoses, caveats, and warnings, only to be bumped off the bestseller list by the next self-proclaimed fascism expert. *¡No Pasarán!* is not that book. These writer-activists understand fascism to be a many-headed hydra that defies typologies and strongman tropes and can only be apprehended in the dialectic of resistance. Antifascism is not an exercise in abstract thinking but an active, collective struggle for a new world. This book will get dog-eared and dirty, but not by gathering dust."

—ROBIN D. G. KELLEY, AUTHOR OF *FREEDOM DREAMS*

"*¡No Pasarán!* skewers the popular one-dimensional interpretation of antifascism to reveal how our struggle must challenge all forms of oppression if we are to ever truly build a world free from fascism."

—MARK BRAY, AUTHOR OF *ANTIFA*

¡No Pasarán! is an anthology of antifascist writing that takes up the fight against white supremacy and the far-right from multiple angles. From the history of antifascism to today's movement to identify, deplatform, and confront the right, and the ways an insurgent fascism is growing within capitalist democracies, a myriad of voices come together to shape the new face of antifascism in a moment of social and political flux.

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